THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K S ELANGOVAN): (a) No case of misuse of the ten year limit rule by importers of refurbished medical equipment through cargo terminal at Delhi, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi and Mumbai Air Cargo Complex has come to light;

(b) There is no sharp increase in the import of outdated and obsolete video processors and endoscopes during the last four months through under invoicing and submission of fake Chartered Engineers Certificate. However, import of few old and used C.T. Scan machines have been noticed in the Jawahar Custom House, Mumbai during the last four months and three refurbished video processors and two refurbished endoscopes (all less than ten years old) have been imported through Air Cargo Complex, New Delhi during the last six months;

(c) and (d) In all cases of import of refurbished medical equipments consignments are subjected to 100% examination to verify the serial number of the machine and the date of manufacture The Toshiba and Ge Brand C.T Scan machines bear the year of manufacture on their machine plate Hence, verification from dealers is not required.

Funds for export promotion

†1944. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have sanctioned an amount of Rs. 450 crores to encourage exports; and

(b) if so, the procedure for selection of the exporters and allocation of funds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) To encourage exports a "Market Access Initiative" Scheme is operational with an outlay of Rs. 552 00 crore during the 10th Five Year Plan Period.

(b) Under the Scheme, funds are sanctioned to Export Promotion Councils/Apex Chambers/Registered trade bodies/Indian Missions abroad/State Governments after consideration and approval of the proposals by the Empowered Committee constituted for this purpose.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

The Empowered Committee considers the proposals selected on the basis of criteria prescribed under the Scheme.

Crisis in Indian Tea Industry

†1945. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any decline in the demand of Indian tea in the international market;

(b) whether the industry is suffering from a crisis;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the steps Government propose to improve the condition of the tea industry; and

(e) the steps being taken by Government to improve the quality and productivity of tea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) There was a decline in the demand for Indian tea in the international market during the last few years. However, during the first quarter of the current financial year 2004-05, tea exports from India were higher at 41.46 million kgs. as compared to 30.23 million kgs. during the corresponding period of 2003-04.

(b) and (c) The Indian tea industry has been passing through a period of depressed prices over the past five years. This continuous fall in prices of tea, coupled with high costs of production, sluggish rate of growth of domestic demand and fall in exports have adversely affected the viability of tea gardens, particularly the medium sized and financially weak, resulting in closure/abandonment of some tea gardens in the country. The industry is also beset with long term problems like old age of the plantations, worn-out machinery in the processing factories and poor infrastructure facilities.

(d) Several steps have been taken by the Government to improve the condition of the Indian tea industry. These include setting up of a special fund equivalent to collections by way of additional duty of excise

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.